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FBI counts 1,000 Soviet spies in U.S.

From Chicago Tribune wires

WASHINGTON—Three people expelled last week from the United States because they were accused of being Soviet spies are only a few of about 1,000 communist agents operating in this country, FBI Director William Webster said Sunday.

He said there are about 3,000 Soviet-bloc diplomats in the United States, and 30 to 40 percent pursue U.S. secrets, especially military information and laser and computer technology. They are watched carefully but are not usually expelled.

"These are going on all the time," Webster said on CBS-TV's "Face the Nation."

"One out of three at varying times have intelligence responsibilities, training and assignments . . . 30 to 40 percent are involved in espionage. These are the people we have actually identified as known intelligence officers," he said.

The U.S. decision to announce the expulsions last Thursday was made only

after foreign policy and national security considerations were considered, he said. By expelling the three, the administration wanted to send a message to the Soviet Union, he said.

"THERE ARE foreign policy and national security considerations," Webster said. "There are other considerations besides our own intelligence operations."

The FBI identified the expelled agents as a military attache from the Soviet Embassy caught retrieving rolls of film containing secret information from the base of a tree in a Washington suburb, an expert on U.S. affairs who tried to obtain highly classified information from a congressional aide, and an intelligence officer at the Soviet UN mission.

But Webster said it was becoming more difficult for the FBI to keep track of foreign diplomats who had what he called "intelligence responsibilities" in the United States. He cited a lack of staff and funds.

Apart from military secrets and military strategy, the Soviet Union had increased its efforts to obtain high technology especially in lasers and computers, he said.

"There is a broad effort not only to steal the secrets but to obtain samples through the use of diplomatic pouches and transhipment through other countries," he said.

WEBSTER ALSO SAID the Soviet Union had sought "diligently, assiduously and through the use of funds" to gain control of organizations within the U.S. nuclear freeze movement. But he said there was no evidence Moscow had succeeded in dominating or successfully manipulating the movement.

This month, France expelled 47 Soviet diplomats, journalists and trade representatives, saying they were suspected of being spies. Britain, Spain and Italy also have expelled Soviets on the same grounds.